



FEMA

Couple Executes Elevation Project in Combating Flood

Henderson County, IL—In June 2008, residents in 21 counties suffered flood-related losses. While some homeowners began tearing down their homes, vowing never to rebuild in a local retirement community, Bill and Karen Opel will continue to enjoy the quiet life, free from the hustle and bustle of the big city, due to mitigation measures employed during the construction process of their home for retirement.

“My wife and I did everything in this house except lay the carpet,” said Bill Opel, a retired carpenter. “We have made it through several floods, following the mitigation measures, without any major flood-related damages.”

Before deciding to make the river town of Shokokon a permanent residence, Bill and Karen Opel had leased several properties in the area as vacation spots, starting in 1975. The town, a retirement community located on the Mississippi River, had a history of flood events. The couple had witnessed the devastation caused by flooding. Following one flooding event, they returned to find their trailer and its contents destroyed. So when the Opels decided to build their 1,064-square-foot, wood-frame home, they knew that it would have to be elevated.

“We were just coming down here on weekends to get away from the city and all the traffic. We lived in Peoria, Illinois,” said Bill Opel. “A guy brought me here [Shokokon] to go duck hunting. That one time—that’s all it took. Karen and I knew the town’s flood history, but we got to liking it so much down here until we decided to move here permanently. We also knew that we had to be prepared.”

The Opels began construction on their new home in April 1995 and moved into it in November of that same year. The home sits on 15, 12-foot steel pilings that are embedded 4 feet into the ground. Each piling has 5-foot lengths of rebar, held together with a wire basket tie, in the center.



Henderson County,
Illinois



Quick Facts

Year:

1993

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Elevation, Structural

Primary Funding:

Homeowner